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South Mountain Freeway study approved

Tribe allows access to Gila River Reservation

Kerry Fehr-Snyder

The Arizona Republic

Nov. 28, 2007 12:00 AM

AHWATUKEE - At first blush, it looks like the most hopeful sign for South Mountain Freeway foes in years.

But the Gila River Indian Community wants to make it clear that allowing the state Transportation Department access to its land doesn't mean that the community has reversed its objection to building the proposed 22-mile freeway on reservation land.

"That's not even on the table," said spokeswoman Alia Maisonet. "This is just so it (the Arizona Department of Transportation) can complete the study for the Pecos Road alignment."

The community announced Tuesday that it will give ADOT one year to access its land for an environmental-impact statement, which is due out next year. Over the years, there has been talk of pushing the freeway alignment south onto reservation land, but the community has barred ADOT from studying that option.

The community's new decision doesn't change that, Maisonet said. Instead, ADOT will be allowed to study possible water runoff, pollution and other environmental impacts created by the \$1.7 billion freeway in Ahwatukee.

"We explained to ADOT that this is not to mean there is a freeway on our land or a freeway even to be considered on the land," Maisonet said.

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bolder53

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Posted Nov-28
5:10 AM

What the hell are the Indians talking about. Environmental study? For what? The land is nothing. It is trashed like the rest of the reservation. The freeway would be a HUGE improvement over what is ther now, which is nothing. These people need an attitude adjustment. We built ne houses years ago right off 51st ave and they were trashed within a year and still are. The freeway would be the nicest thing on that reservation.

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Posted Nov-28
7:14 AM

Still, bolder53, it IS their reservation. :-) Any alignment that avoids cutting up South Mountain Park seems advantageous but there's a casino and houses to be considered, not to mention the price the Tribe is sure to demand.

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Posted Nov-28
8:59 AM

For the Gila river Indian Community, having the freeway on there land would lead to some positive business opportunities just like the Salt River Tribe along the 101, something they should take into consideration.

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Posted Nov-28
9:02 AM

Yes it is our land! and I agree, an evironmental study is a bad idea. I say this because it gives false hope to people living in Awatukee - it makes them think that there is going to be a freeway there someday.

And if our reservation is trashed it's probably because outsiders who don't care about land the way we do, litter and leave their trash behind. I think the freeway would bring about horrible things. When my district found out about this study, we were very upset.

There's sacred land that would be disturbed by the study and freeway. That's the conflict. There's no way about it, other than to make Beltline wider and into a freeway. What's sacred is sacred and money won't make it unsacred, or even the convience of outsiders, won't make it unsacred. My heart still hurts over this... I thought this debate was over.

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